DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 239 989 SO 015 271

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TITLE Composition. How To Make a Picture.
INSTITUTION Area Education Agency 7, Cedar Falls, IA.
PUB DATE 80
NOTE 28p.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Materials (For Learner) (051) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Art Activities; *Art Education; *Art Expression; Elementary Secondary Education; Instructional Materials; Learning Activities; Skill Development; Teacher Developed Materials; Units of Study
IDENTIFIERS *Composition (Art); PF Project

ABSTRACT

Designed to aid art or classroom instructors in teaching the fundamentals of artistic composition, this learning packet can be adapted to any grade level. Eleven sections cover selection of a subject, choice of a center of interest, types of balance, line of vision, filling space, creation of patterns, value (light vs. dark), and perspective. Each chapter describes methods, defines specialized terms, and provides several learning activities. Numerous illustrations clarify each concept. A posttest and list of resources concludes the packet. This document is one of a series of materials from the Iowa Area Education Agency 7 Teacher project. (LP)

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Composition

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HOW TO MAKE A PICTURE

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SO 015 271

AREA EDUCATION AGENCY 7

Cedar Falls, Iowa

Document title: Composition: How to Make a Picture

Author(s): Deb Roach

Developed with funds provided by a federal Teacher Center grant contract under the provisions of the Higher Education Act of 1965.

AEA 7 Teacher Center
Waterloo, Iowa
Sept. 15, 1978 to Aug. 15, 1983

Teacher Center Policy Board Chair - Doris Mauer
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INTRODUCTION

This packet is designed to aid art teachers and classroom teachers in teaching the fundamentals of composition. Composition is the beginning of all art and all too often passed over in the hurry to make something.

Information pages with simplified explanations are followed up with worksheets, activities and media. These activities can be adjusted to any grade level by increasing or decreasing the complexity.

Picture making is not only a natural talent. It can be learned!

Teacher Center

SELECTION

Selection of subject matter for a composition is of major importance. It doesn't need to be typical subjects like fruits, vegetables, or portraits. Just drawing anything and practicing is important to developing success.

Have students start by just drawing one object they are interested in and then work up to more. Help them develop technical skills and confidence first, before tackling a major composition. It usually works best to have a 1-1 relationship of student to his chosen subject.

Some non-traditional subject matter ideas for the classroom

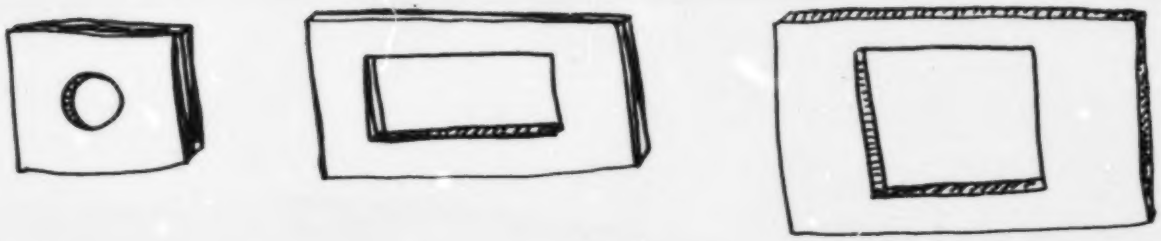
Mechanical:	radios, TV, telephone, typewriter, stereo, calculator, computer, kitchen appliances
Hobby:	saddle, tennis racket, balls, games, cards, stamps, coins, golf club, skiis, toys, musical instruments
Transportation:	Bicycle, moped, skateboard, roller skates, motor cycle, go-cart, uni-cycle, tricycle
Boxes/cans:	Pop cans, food boxes, candy wrappers, packages
Clothes:	shoes, jackets, hats, helmets, belts, jewelry, costumes

Activity 1: See film AEA 7 1457A Mona Lisa

Activity 2: See film AEA 7 9881A Discovering Composition in Art. Discuss after the films. This film covers selection, balance, movement, focus, rhythm, and positive and negative space.

Activity 3: Have students make view finders to help them focus on pleasing and unusual compositions. They can be made in circle, square, and rectangle formats.

They can use them in the classroom, at home, outdoors, or on a specific still life arrangement. They can draw a few of the "framed" pictures they find. They need not be recognizable.

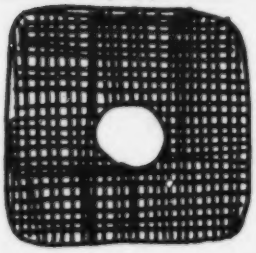


Activity 4: After students have chosen a subject they care about, have them draw 3-5 thumbnail sketches of the same object. They should be different views and different sizes. Then they can combine 3 of the ideas in a finished composition, picking one view to be the center of interest.

CENTER OF INTEREST

Once subject matter is chosen, a focal point must be chosen for composition. One area should make the main statement to the viewer. A center of interest can be carefully planned many ways. Lines can then move the viewer's eye throughout the rest of the composition.

A single black dot on a white background creates a center of interest. Contrast of the small black dot to the large white area draws attention to it.



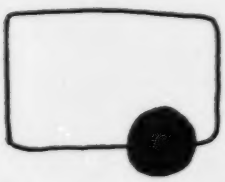
The reverse creates the same center of focus.

The more dots that are exactly the same, the less emphasis there is on one.

Many dots exactly the same form a pattern. Not one stands out.

A straight line holds no intrigue for the viewer.
One jog demands the viewer's attention.

More jogs are less exciting.



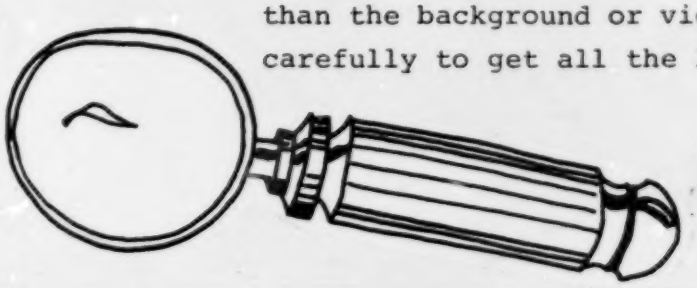
When a line and a dot (or any object) intersect, their relationship creates a center of focus.

Methods of Creating a Center of Interest

1. Size: Make your main interest significantly larger or smaller than other objects.

2. Brightness: Color can make an object stand out. Example: red against black or a pale blue against a field of oranges. It must be significantly different to stand out. Squint at the art work and see why your eye goes to one area first.

3. Detail: Objects of focus should be much more detailed than the background or vice versa. Examine carefully to get all the little details, too.



4. Light vs. dark: An object will stand out if it is the lightest or darkest.

Activity 1: Have students, using only geometric shapes, create a composition using all 4 types of focus. Sometimes more than one method can be used simultaneously to create more emphasis.

Activity 2: Look at slides or actual art work. Have students identify focus of attention and what method/s artist used.

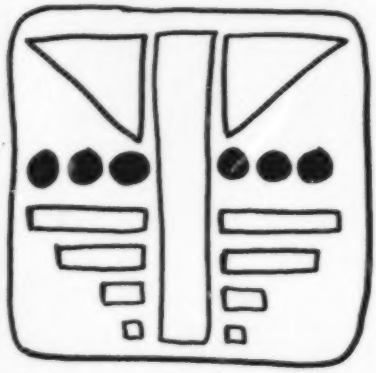
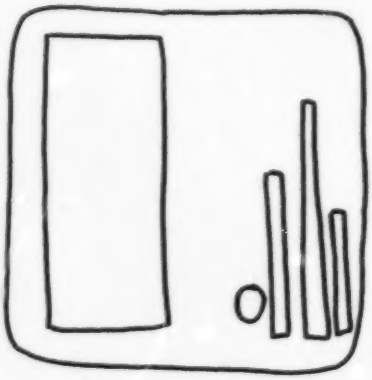
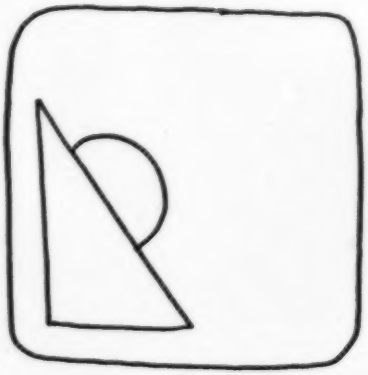
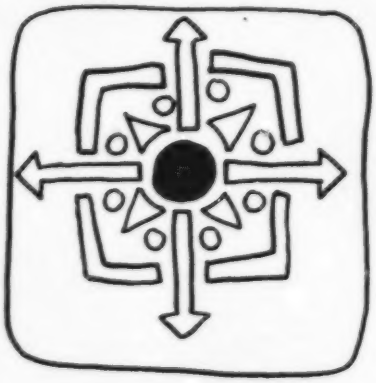
BALANCE

All successful compositions use one of three types of balance. For some people this sense of balance is natural but students can learn to identify and create a successful balanced composition. Most paintings are asymmetrical balance to create more exciting and more natural arrangements.

Definitions:

Symmetrical: (Formal)	Design to exactly the same on both halves. If it were cut in two, it would have mirror images. Often used in interior decoration (i.e. fireplace arrangements with a candle on each side, etc.)
Asymmetrical: (informal)	The visual weight of each half of the design are equal but not exactly the same.
Radial:	All components radiate from the center point. If design is cut into pie shapes, they would be exactly alike.
Activity 1:	Use overhead projector with examples. Use geometric shapes first to keep it simple. Have students identify and come up and do their own.

Activity 2: Worksheet: Using geometric shapes

	Example:	Finish:	Create your own:
SYMMETRICAL			
ASYMMETRICAL			
RADIAL			

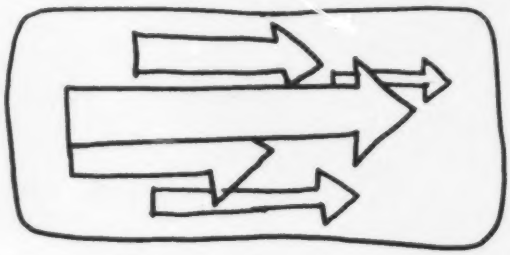
Activity 3: Using various geometric shapes (circles, half-circles, squares, rectangles, and triangles) have students create a mosaic on black construction paper using one or all types of balance. Chips should be many colors and many sizes.

Activity 4: Set a variety of still life objects on table in front of room. Have students come up and arrange an uneven number of those objects in asymmetrical balance. Let each student have a chance, have him identify and explain.

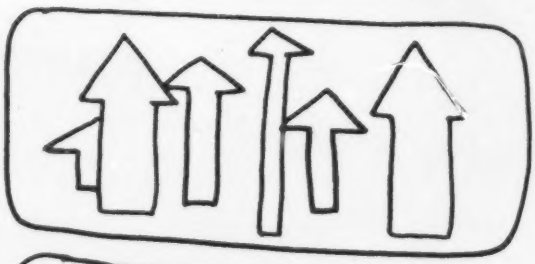
Activity 5: Cut up some cartoon pictures. White out or mask over a portion of the picture that will "unbalance" it. Have students put in something to balance it.

LINE

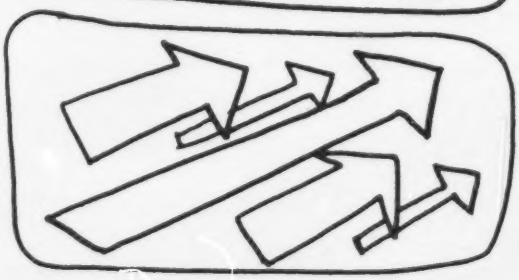
Line can lead a viewer's eye thro·gh a composition and give an overall feeling. For success, there must be a dominant direction, with most of the lines going one direction. Of course, perpendicular and diagonal lines will add variety. Variety within unity!



Dominant Horizontal Line will give a composition a relaxed, restful and peaceful tone. Most landscapes have horizontal dominant line.



Dominant Vertical Line will lend a composition stable, solid, regal, and stately feeling. Examples are skyscraper and city scapes.

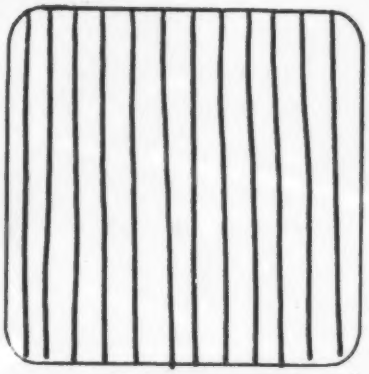


Dominant Diagonal Line makes a picture exciting and full of action. Care should be taken to avoid too much confusion though. Most sport and action composition use diagonal dominance.

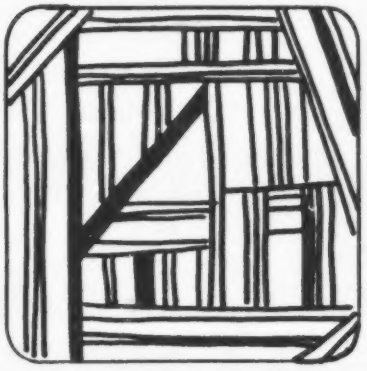
Activity 1: Take several photos or art works and project on overhead. (Magazine pictures can be transferred to acetate by using turpentine). Slides can be used also. Make overlays that show dominant direction. There will be lines going all directions but one direction will be dominant. Examples of specific slides to exemplify this are listed at end.

Activity 2: Use string on a overhead project to create straight and curved line designs. Discuss moods and success of each arrangement.

Activity 3: Worksheet/information sheet



A



B

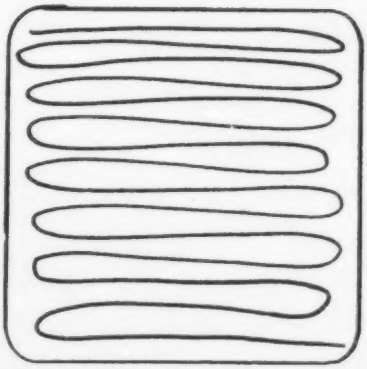
WHICH LOOKS BETTER?

WHY?

-B has 1 dominant line with a few perpendicular and diagonals for variety

-Variety in line width

-Variety in space between lines



A

B

WHICH LOOKS BETTER?

WHY?

-B has variety with unity. The circular line is repeated and verticals are dominant

-variety between lines space

Activity 4: Give each student 2 large pieces of paper. Have them fill one with straight lines and the other with curved lines. Felt tip pens and straight edges will help. Finished line designs are most successful if lines don't intersect.

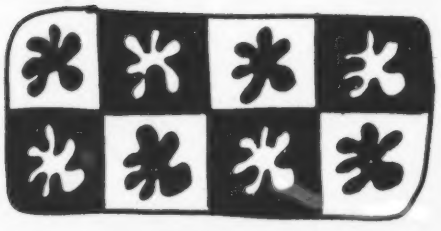
SPACE

The hardest job an artist has is to fill an empty space and create something better than the white page. An understanding of space and how it can be divided will help in composition.

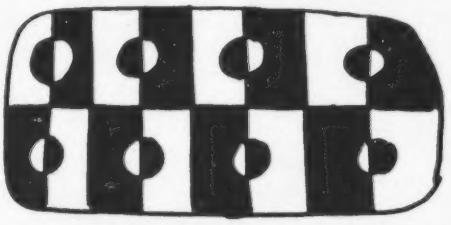
Positive space: The added art that makes the statement

Negative space: The empty background space that surrounds the positive space.

Activity 1: Have students cut 4 equal rectangles from a standard 8 x 12 piece of construction paper. Fold each in half and cut a shape on the fold. These may be all different or the same. Lay and glue out on a 12 x 16 construction paper (both positive and negative pieces) in checkerboard style. Students can discuss the motif created by both positive and negative shapes. The same activity can be done with more than 4 and smaller folded pieces cut on the fold. Also, both positive and negative pieces can be cut on the fold and be glued interplaying them.



OR



Activity 2: Using line only have students leave negative space as the main statement of the composition

PATTERN

Repetition of a single design or motif can create a pattern. Repetition can be found in patterns of nature. Positive and negative space can create a pattern. Pattern can be used as a decorative part of a picture or as an overall design for fabric.

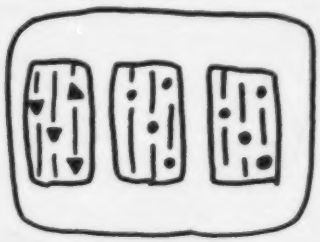
Activity 1: Have students identify patterns in the room. See if they can recognize the motif that is repeated in radiators, windows, floor tile, cement block, etc.

Activity 2: Cut large erasers in half. Give each student one half and let them cut a simple shape into the eraser, removing the negative space. Use this as a stamp to create a pattern by alternating, grouping, or diagonals. Stamp ink pads work well if printer's ink isn't available.

Activity 3: Using toothpicks, paper clips, matches (any large quantity--easy to get object), have students arrange in various patterns on paper. Usually uneven numbers are most successful. Try grouping into motifs that will be repeated.

Activity 4: Give all students graph paper. Have them grid off rectangles or squares, make a motif in that area, staying on graph lines or corners, and repeat that pattern. May change motif as rows develop.

Activity 5: Cut pieces of patterned material (small motifs) about 4" x 4". Use rubber cement to attach to one side of piece of paper. With a pencil or color, the student can copy the motif as a pattern, then change it slightly.

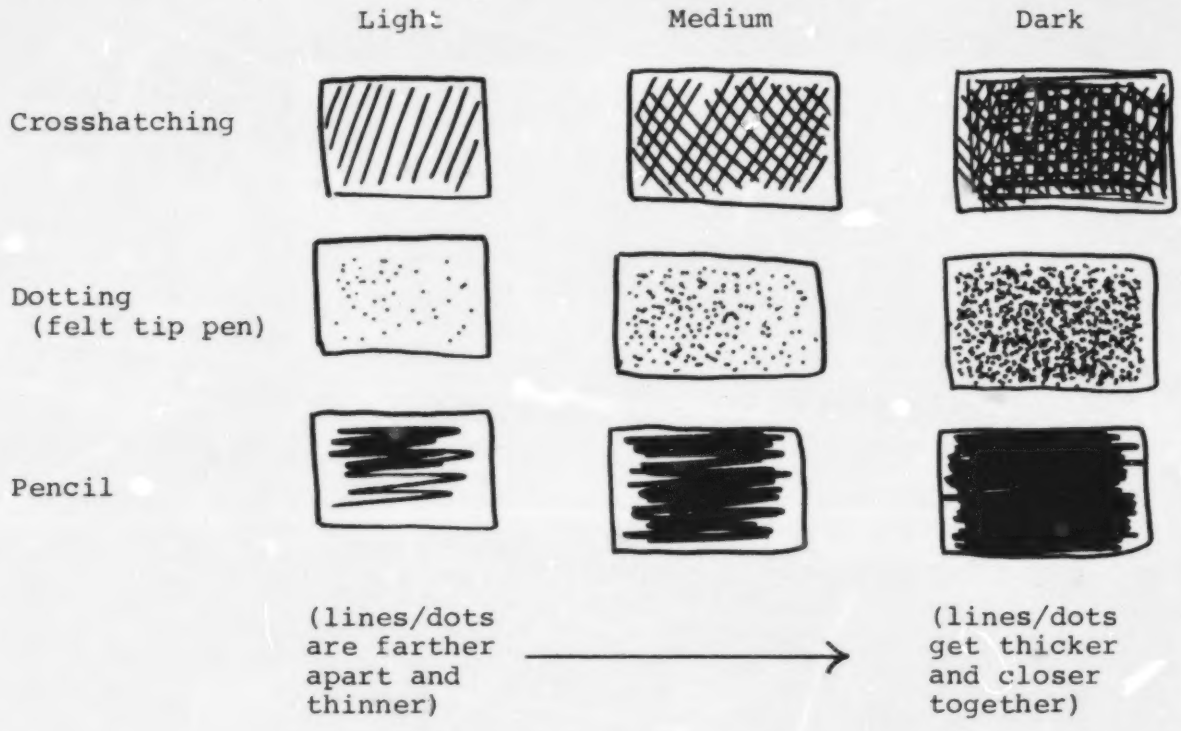


Activity 6: Have students make 3-5 motifs using their initials. Repeat the one they choose as a pattern.

VALUE

Value is the intensity of dark vs. light in a composition. There must be darks, lights and medium shades repeated through a successful composition. Also connecting some of the darks, etc. can help the flow of the viewer's eye over the picture.

Methods of creating three shades in a picture:

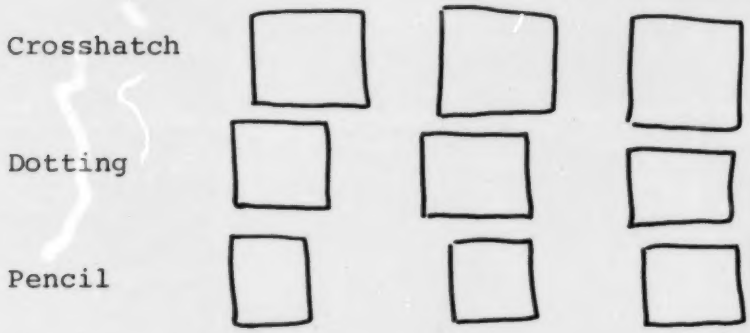


Activity 1: Light sources need to be evaluated and its effect on subject matters. Turn classroom lights off and using a spot light, have students identify where darks, lights, and mediums are. Move the light and observe what happens. Use shiny objects first, then more subtly highlighted objects like cloth.

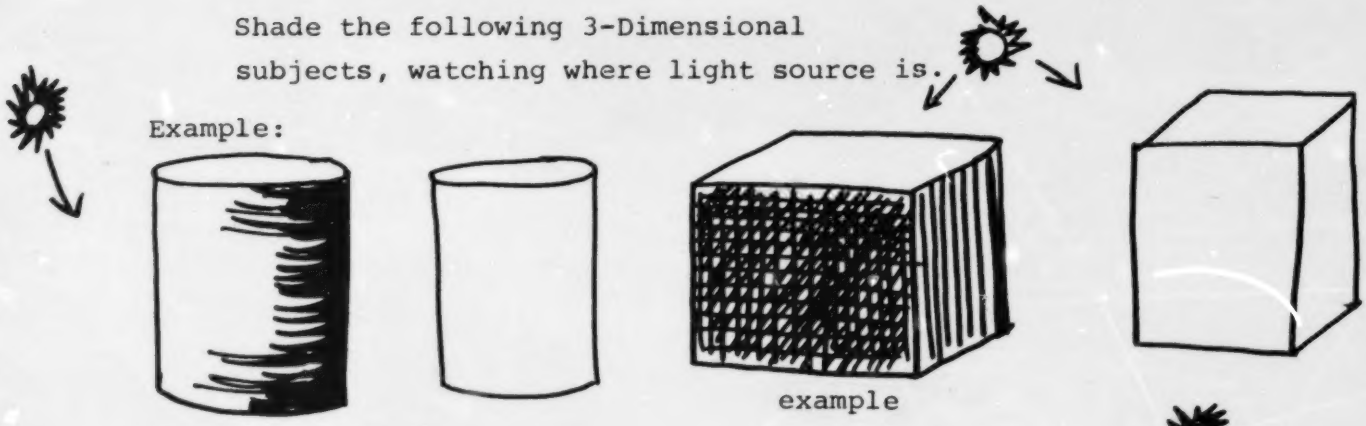
Activity 2: Look at some actual art works, or slides and discuss the artists' methods of shading. Use black and white pictures at first, color as you get more advanced.

Activity 3: Have students cut black and white magazine or newspaper pictures. Look for examples of cross-hatching and dotting used often in printing processes.
Have students mark areas of dark, light and mediums with a pencil/pen so they can see the natural flow of shadow and light.

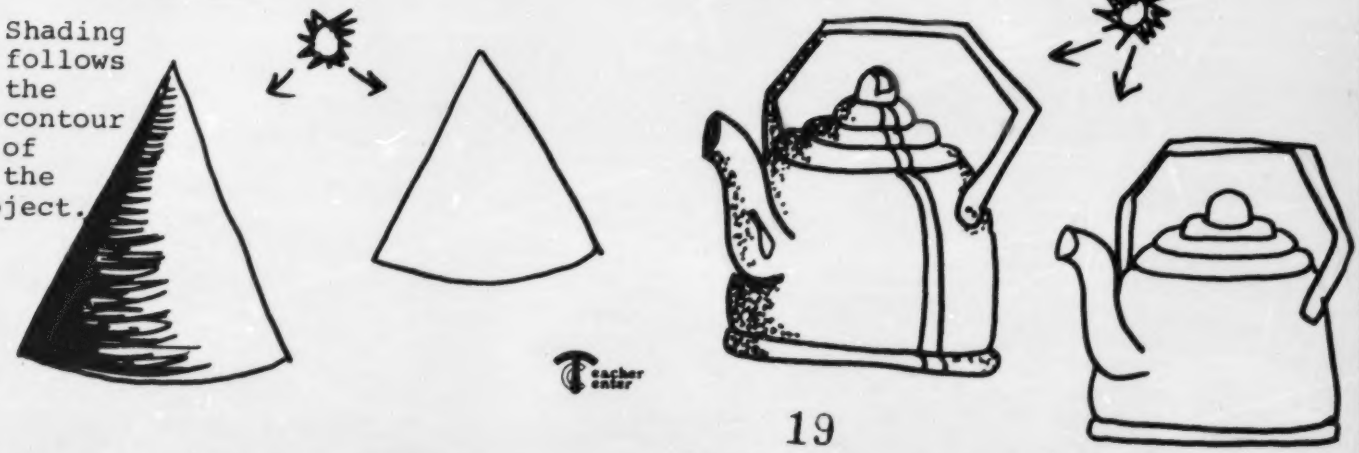
Activity 4: Worksheet
Make 3 shades by using 3 methods



Shade the following 3-Dimensional subjects, watching where light source is.



Shading follows the contour of the object.

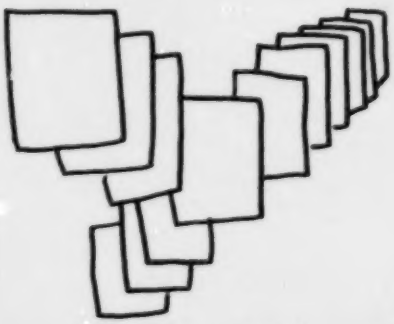


PERSPECTIVE

Perspective is the most technically challenging aspect of composition. There are some basic rules to follow until the artist can approximate proper perspective. But you can always fall back on these rules. Drawing and painting is the process of creating the illusion of a 3-Dimensional object on a 2-Dimensional surface. The artist must draw what the eye sees, not what he knows is there.

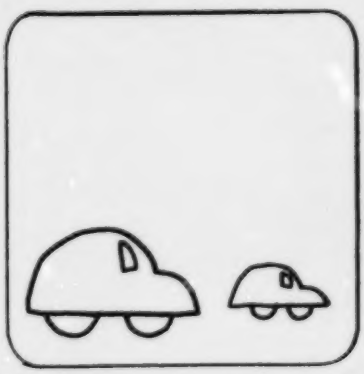
Methods to Create Depth on 2-Dimensional Surface

1. Overlapping: The object closest to viewer is in full view and is largest. Which square is closest?



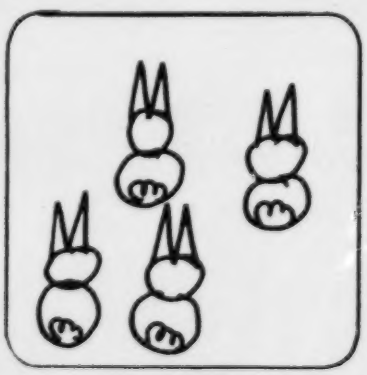
2. Small versus large: Objects appear smaller in the distance, although they are exactly the same size in real life.

   Which car is closer?



3. Low vs. high: The objects that are lowest in a composition appear to be closer.

   Which is closer?



4. More detail versus less detail: The eye can't see great detail in things in the distance. Distant objects become blurred or grayed the further away.

   Which is closer?

5. Converging lines: This is just one part of formal mechanical perspective. Draftsmen and engineers learn to draw accurate renderings with T-squares, compasses, and triangles. A student needs only a ruler and some guidelines to create believable perspective on paper. All parallel lines appear to converge in the distance.

   Terms:

   Horizon line: the line formed when sky meets land or sea

   Vertical lines: lines that go up and down

   Horizontal lines: lines that go across

   Perspective lines: lines that go from the corner of a building to the vanishing point

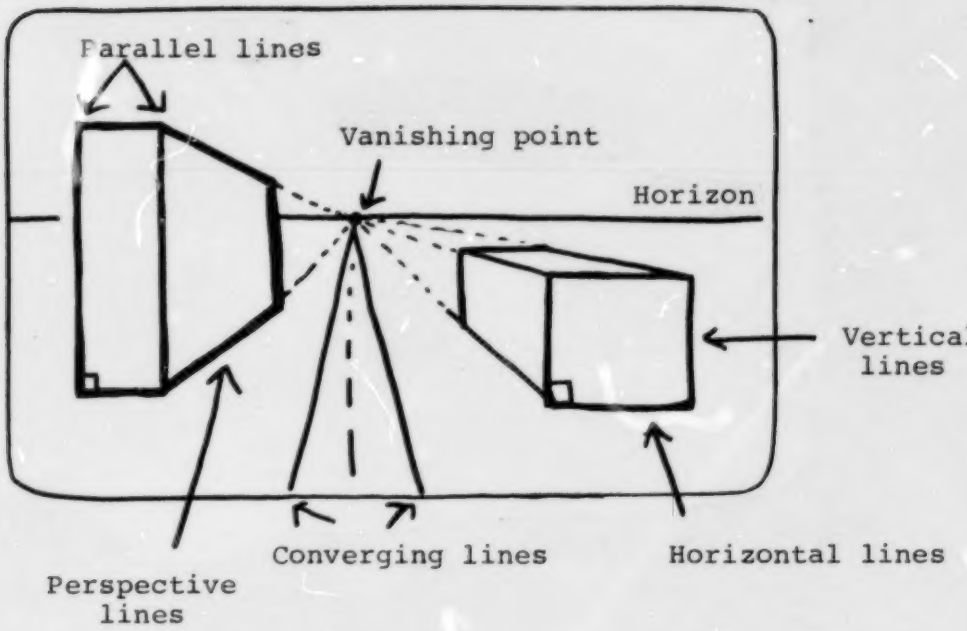
   Parallel lines: 2 lines that are always the same distance apart

   Converging lines: parallel lines that appear to meet in the distance

   Vanishing point: the spot on the horizon line where all lines converge

   Rules:

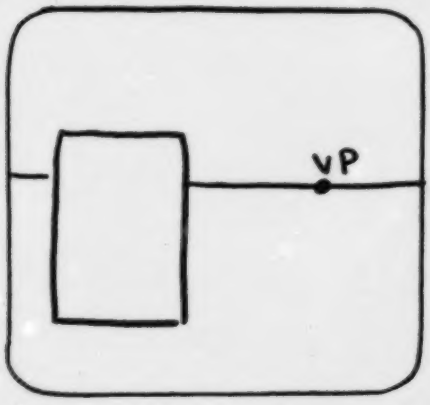
   1. All vertical and horizontal square with the surface of the paper remain so.
   2. To make converging side lines on a building or to line up a row of parking meters, line the ruler up with the corner of the building or starting spot and the vanishing point.
   3. If the top of a building is above the horizon line, you will not see the top surface. If it is below the horizon line, you will see the top surface or roof.



Activity 1: See film AEA 7 #2248 Discovering Perspective and discuss.

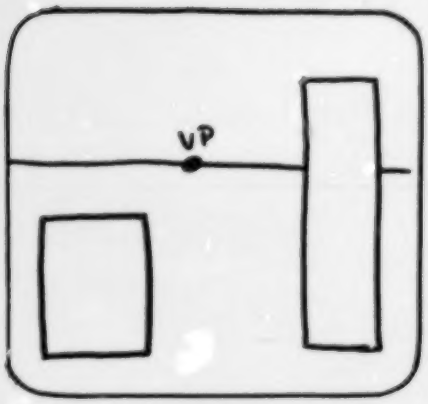
Activity 2: Show slides of art work and check artists' perspective lines once you have determined the vanishing point. Discuss the artists' ability to guess at correct lines and approximate after practice with rulers.

Activity 3: Worksheet for practice

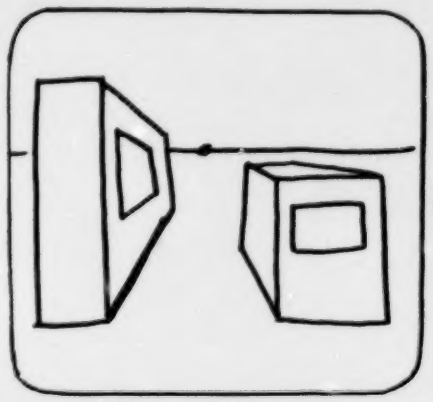


Use a ruler and draw the perspective lines (side) on this building. Line up corner with the vanishing point and put a vertical line for the rear of the building.

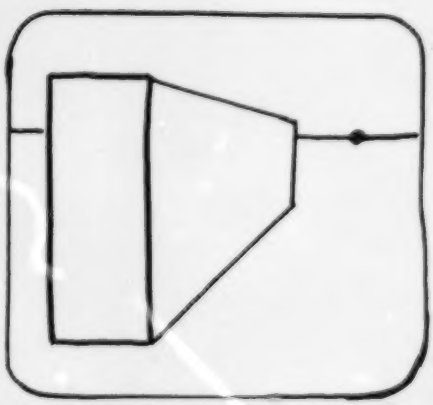
Finish the perspective lines on these 2 buildings. Why can't you see the top of the tall building?



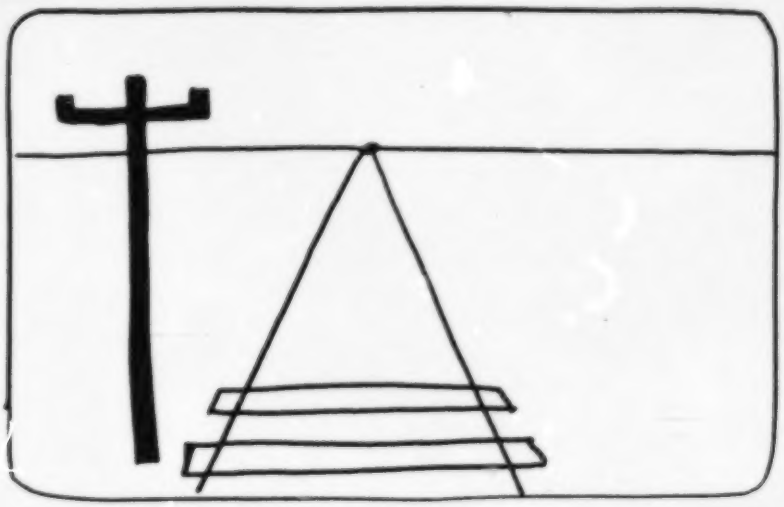
Windows--Windows and signs are made the same way as the surface they are attached to. If the front of building, facing viewer, has right angles, then windows will also. If the side has perspective lines, so will the windows.



Put windows on both surfaces of this building. Remember--verticals will remain vertical always.



Finish this picture by continuing the railroad tracks and telephone poles. Remember, they get smaller and closer together in the distance. Remember to follow your ruler and perspective lines.



Activity 4: Assign a perspective drawing of a city street. Add windows, signs, cars, people and other objects using the following to show depth.

1. overlapping
2. small vs. large
3. low vs. high
4. more vs. less detail
5. converging lines

POST TEST

1. Name and give examples of 3 types of balance.

2. Lines that go up and down are_____.

3. Lines that go across are_____.

4. The spot where sky meets ground is called_____.

5. The vanishing point is where all _____ lines converge.

6. _____lines go from the corner of a building to the vanishing point.

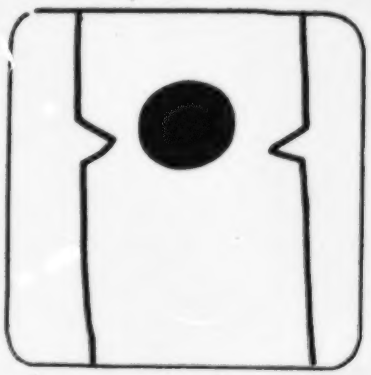
7. Using geometric shapes create a focus or center of interest using all of the following:

   a. dark vs. light
   b. large vs. small
   c. detail

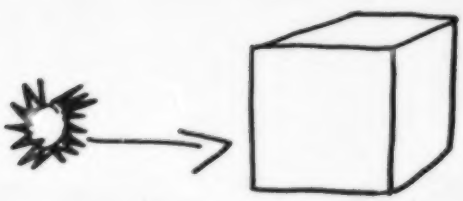
8. Name and give examples of 5 methods to create the illusion of 3-dimensions on 2 dimensional paper. (perspective)

9. Change the motif in this pattern and repeat it.

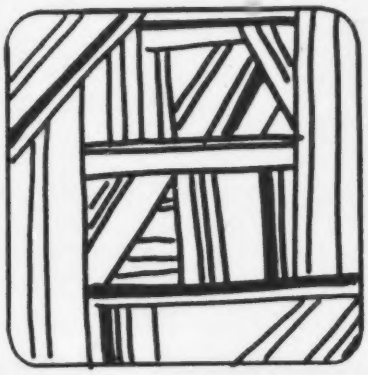
10. Name 2 ways the artist made the dot the focus in this picture.



11. Shade this cube, using one of the 3 techniques, dotting, shading, or crosshatching.



12. Name 2 reasons why A. looks better than B.



A

B

MEDIA FROM AEA 7

Films

Mona Lisa--1457A
Discovering Composition in Art--9881A
Discovering Ideas for Art--9874A
Creative Pattern--9873
Discovering Perspective--2248

Slides

Artist's Eye--Pictorial Composition--6901
Survey of American Painting--6907
100 famous Paintings--6066
100 more famous Paintings--6067

SPECIFIC ART WORK TO DEMONSTRATE

Dominant Horizontal Line:	Landscapes by Winslow Homer and Andrew Wyeth, Edward Hopper
Dominant Vertical Line:	Brooklyn Bridge by Joseph Stella, Rouen Cathedral by Claude Monet Skyscrapers by Joseph Stella
Dominant Diagonal Line:	Mounted Officer of the Imperical Guard by Theodore Gericault, Nude Descending the Staircase by Marcel DuChamp
Focus & Center of Interest:	Triad by Barnet Newman Mao by Al Held Etching 1 by Lee Bontecou
Asymmetrical Balance:	Any of Piet Mondrian's arrangements
Symmetrical Balance:	Tahki-1-Sulayman by Frank Stella Top Cat by Peter Max
Pattern:	Campbell Soup Cans & Marilyn Monroe by Andy Warhol
Positive/Negative Space:	Reclining Figure, sculptor Henry Moore Woman Combing Her Hair, sculptor Alexander Archipenko Nid-Enchanteur by Jean Arp